

Users' Perception of Online Public Access Catalogue in Enabling Information Retrieval in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria Nsukka

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Abstract

The study explored users' perception of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) in enabling information retrieval in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library (NAL), University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), Nigeria. The aim is to ascertain how users of the library perceive the OPAC as regards to enabling retrieval of information resources in the library. Three research questions guided the study and descriptive survey research design was used to frame it. The population of the study was 15,483 registered library users, and a total of seven hundred and seventy-four (774) users were sampled from the population. This population cut across all levels and modes of study in the university. The data for the research was gathered through the instrument of a questionnaire which was generated in line with the research specific objectives and distributed among the students. The collected data were analysed using frequency and percentage. From the analysis, the findings revealed that OPAC is easy to navigate, it can search library resources from anywhere with internet connection and the clear search results enhances usability. However, some users feel overwhelmed by the volume of search results displayed with OPAC, a good number of them feel unfamiliar with the language of OPAC and most of them experience technical issues such as slow loading, website downtime, etc. In a similar vein, a good number of users believe that there is lack of awareness of the advantages of OPAC over traditional catalogue system, and there is lack of information search skills that affect the ability to use OPAC. The users were also challenged by limited access to internet network of which without it, OPAC use will not be efficiently utilized. Based on the findings, the study recommended that the library should increase the awareness of OPAC services among the university community. It was also recommended that the library should consistently educate users on the importance of OPAC especially as regards to retrieval of information resources in the library.

Keywords

OPAC, Library catalogue, information resources, Information retrieval, University library

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Introduction

Over the years, library operations have advanced and improved to provide better services to the users. The introduction of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) into the library system has advanced the overall library operations. The greatest of it all is the automation of the library catalogue which is aimed to improve access to library resources. The Online Public

Access Catalogue is a computerized form of library catalogue designed to make searching and retrieval of bibliographic records easier and faster. According to Ekeh and Atandah (2021) OPAC is a computerized form of library catalogue which is available online and has made searching and retrieval of bibliographic records easier and faster. It is also considered as one of the technologies which has changed the way in which libraries and information centres serve their users as

well as how users access and retrieve. As a store house of knowledge, it is the role of the library to provide information materials to support teaching, learning and research of its institution. It is considered as one of the information system that are charged with the responsibilities of acquiring, processing, organizing, storing, preserving and disseminating information resources to users on request. This is to say that among the collections of the library are documents like books, thesis, manuscripts, periodicals, pamphlets, maps, motion pictures, tapes and other printed and non-printed materials. With its vast collection, it can be well imagined what will become of the documents if they are not systematically prepared. This is the reason why the library has a library catalogue. The library catalogue acts as the index to the library collections. Without this catalogue, it would be difficult for the library staff and library users to use the library resources because; none would be able to memorize every collection in the library. The catalogue, therefore, provide a retrieval system which enables the retrieval of resources from vast collections of the library either by subject, author, title or any other attribute to such materials.

Information retrieval is the process of searching for relevant information from a collection of resources. According to Tofi, et al (2021), information retrieval is the process of retrieving documents from a collection in response to a query (or search request). As the name implies, Information retrieval indicates that there are some documents or records containing information that have been organized in an order suitable for easy retrieval and as such there is need for a retrieval system. OPAC as an information retrieval tool, aids in location, access and retrieval of document from its storage system. According to Fabunmi and Asubiojo in Eserada and Okolo (2019) OPAC is an interface of information retrieval system which assists information searchers to access

information resources (Swaminathan, 2017). resources of libraries using several access points. Similarly, Ukpebor in Igere (2022), states that OPAC provides wider access since users can retrieve information from any participating library or even search online from their home computer. Therefore, retrieval of information resources in this study means having access and effectively locating a given information resources in the university library.

Being an information power house, effective utilization of its resources is paramount for any library. This is the reason why libraries' information retrieval continues to be an important issue for university libraries. According to Yusuf (2012), some strategies are necessary for enhancing utilization of OPAC in libraries. In his recommendations, he stated that the library should update entries in OPAC from time to time; library orientation should be prioritizing in the schools, also, that OPAC should be placed closer to the reading areas. Similarly, Ogbole and Morayo (2017) also gave suggestions on improving OPAC provision and sustainable use to include: constant electricity power supply in libraries, train library staff and students; adequate funding of university libraries to sustain OPAC, increase number of computers in university library, OPAC should be designed like Google, maintaining and sustaining technologies in libraries, as well as conducting of usability testing on OPAC on continuous basis. Therefore, it is imperative for university libraries to always evaluate the effectiveness of OPAC so as to get a realistic picture of its performance while also seeking measures for its improvement (Onuoha, Umahi & Bamidele, 2013).

Nnamdi Azikiwe Library (NAL), University of Nigeria, Nsukka, with its rich collections, has in the past adopted different cataloguing practices to ensure effective retrieval of its resources. The card catalogue and book catalogue were the retrieval tools which the library provided for accessing their resources.

However, with the advance in technology and the age of digitalization, the manual catalogues were viewed as slow and inefficient retrieval tool that lacks the capacity to ensure retrieval and access to library resources. Consequently, as the library moved to her newly completed ultra-modern building in 2009, it acquired Koha open-source library software, which was used to convert the already existing library catalogue to automated format. This practice brought about the suspension of the production of card catalogue and the adoption of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). Therefore, for users to be able to retrieve the collections of the library, the access point to use is the library OPAC. Hence, this study tends to examine user's perception of the OPAC as enabler of information retrieval in relation to the manual catalogue which was believed to be effective.

Statement of Problem

Access and retrieval of information has been a major source of concern in all libraries. With the enormous growth of digital content and advent of web search engines, the library has continued to experience underutilization of the library resources. It is observed that this advance in technology has drastically changed the searching behaviour of library users which in turn affects their retrieval strategy. Nowadays, users prefer Google searching, ChatGPT to a library OPAC. As a library that serves as a vital hub for its students, Nnamdi Azikiwe Library has always adopted latest technologies to improve its services to its users. However, amidst the adoption of technologies especially the library OPAC, observation has shown that a good number of library users do not consult the OPAC for their information retrieval in the library. Rather, they prefer browsing through the shelves which leads to indiscriminate wear and tear of the library books. The question therefore, arises on whether the library users find it difficult to

navigate the library OPAC. For this reason, the research tends to find out the users' perception of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) in enabling information retrieval in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library (NAL), University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN).

Purpose of Study

The general purpose of this study is to investigate users' perception of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) in enabling information retrieval in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library (NAL), University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN). However, the following specific objectives will guide the study.

1. To find out how users perceive the effectiveness of the library's OPAC for information retrieval.
2. To determine the level of satisfaction of users of OPAC system for retrieval of information resources in the library.
3. To find out the challenges encountered by users while using the library OPAC for information retrieval.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study. They were articulated in line with the specific objectives of the study.

1. How do users perceive the effectiveness of the library's OPAC for information retrieval?
2. What is the level of satisfaction of users' in the use of OPAC system for retrieval of information resources in the library?
3. What are the challenges encountered by users while using the library OPAC for information retrieval?

Literature Review

The library catalogue is an important retrieval tool designed for library users to

acquaint themselves with the materials in the library. The automated library system has brought enormous changes in library practices especially in complementing the traditional card catalogue with computerized system. According to Kumar and Vohra (2017), OPAC is meant to facilitate access and retrieval of resources through several search approaches such as basic search, advanced search, Boolean search and through diverse access points such as author, title, keywords, ISBN, ISSN and class number. Hence, the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) in academic libraries therefore, is to empower library users to be able to use the library independently and effectively without barriers.

To enhance effective use of OPAC, the first thing is to increase the awareness of the availability of the OPAC. In confirmation, Ruzegwa (2012) asserted that awareness of OPAC is a first step to increase usage of library educational resources to aid students in their learning process. Also, Ferdinand (2020) reported a significant relationship between awareness and usage of OPAC; meaning that, if there is high level of OPAC awareness among library users, it will increase the level of usage of OPAC among users. In support of this, the study of Yusuf (2012) reported that majority of students were aware of OPAC, and hence they used OPAC to satisfy their information need. Similarly, Katabalwa and Mnzava (2020) study on usage of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) by undergraduate students at Sokoine University of Agriculture, revealed that majority of respondents were aware of OPAC. The respondents used OPAC for various reasons including knowing the library materials available in the collection for a short time, locating library materials, and knowing the status of books.

However, a study conducted by Umar, Abareh and Basaka (2017) on awareness and utilization of library online public access catalogue by undergraduate students of

Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU) Bauchi, Nigeria showed that majority of the students lacked the awareness of OPAC, thus, never used the OPAC in exploring the resources available in the library but rather performs shelf-to-shelf browsing. Again, Makun, Danjuma and Abel (2019) in a similar study, explored awareness and use of online public access catalogue by patrons of Bingham University Library, Karu, Nassarawa State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that most of the respondents - 124 (37.2%) - were aware of the OPAC to a very little extent, while 133 (39.9) were not aware of the OPAC services at all, they preferred to physically browse through the library shelves.

Considering the utilization of OPAC by library users, Ekeh and Atanda (2021) carried out a study on utilization of OPAC among library users in some selected tertiary institutions in Lagos state, the findings showed that OPAC usage rate is quite low among the library users. This could be as a result of the fact that most library users are unaware of all the facility available in the OPAC and encounter problem while searching. Likewise, Otuyalo and Babalola (2021) explored the usability and use of Koha OPAC by students in Polytechnic libraries in South-West, Nigeria. The use of OPAC and the usability of OPAC were average indicating that its use was not yet optimized among the students. Also, Eserada and Okolo (2019) study on the use of OPAC in selected university libraries in South-South Nigeria shows that Students' use of OPAC in university libraries in South-South Nigeria is low.

On perceived effect of OPAC in retrieval of information resources in the library, a study by Tofi, et al (2020) investigated the perceived impact of OPAC on effective retrieval of information resources by postgraduate students in Benue State University, Makurdi. The findings show that there is a high perceived impact of OPAC on effective retrieval of information resources by postgraduate students in Benue State

University, Makurdi. The OPAC is used for various purposes such as to know the available resources in the university library, to locate books by author, title and subject, assists in obtaining books from the university library, among others. However, Bamidele, Omeluzor, Onoyeyan and Aluko-Arowolo (2014) found that OPAC was the least method used by the faculty members to retrieve information resources but rather retrieved resources by browsing the shelves. The study, which was on Faculty member's awareness and use of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) services at Babcock University, Nigeria revealed that majority of respondents (71. 4%) were not aware that OPAC can be used to facilitate retrieval of library information resources and thus only (26%) of the respondents used OPAC independently to retrieve library information resources.

On a similar note, Igere (2022) explored information retrieval: role of OPAC in the utilization of library resources by students in university libraries. The study compared the role of OPAC in the utilization of library resources by students in two Universities which are known to have applied an elibrary protocol. It was observed that 33.5% of the respondents utilize the OPAC as a library resource. This is an indication that although OPAC possess numerous advantages, the students/respondents have not been able to harness such for useful academic need. It also reveals that OPAC is used to locate required documents in University of Benin, while in Benson Idahosa University, majority of the students browse through the shelves for documents.

Several factors militate against OPAC in providing effective retrieval of library resources. Such factors may differ from one university and library to another. Aju and Tofi (2020) are of the opinion that library users of OPAC depend on how well university libraries provide internet facilities such as computers, bandwidth, databases, as well as awareness

of ICT facilities to meet their information needs. They went further to report that users of university libraries and information centers are frustrated due to lack of awareness of OPAC operation, inadequate computers/internet facilities, and other basic ICT skills to access, retrieve and exploit information materials.

In line with the above, Fabunmi and Asubiojo (2013) studied awareness and use of online public access catalogue by students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria which indicated that lack of information searching skills, awareness, erratic power supply, network failure and inadequacy of computer terminals designated for the use of OPAC were among the factors inhibiting use of library OPAC. Likewise, in his study on awareness and use of scholarly electronic journals by members of academic staff: a case study of Dar es Salaam University College of Education (DUCE), Msagati (2016) also identified limited number of computers with internet access, inadequate searching skills, low bandwidth and recurrent power outages as some of the barriers that militate against effective use of OPAC. Also, a study by Ogbole and Atinmo (2017) on factors affecting online public access catalogue provision and sustainable use by undergraduates in two selected University Libraries in Ogun and Oyo states, Nigeria. They revealed that user convenience/satisfaction on OPAC use 83(39.7%) and poor OPAC awareness creation by library personnel 68(33.50) are some of the factors affecting OPAC provision.

Based on the literatures reviewed, it is evident that many library users are not aware of the various benefits in the use of OPAC. The decline in document location from the library in this technological age is an indication that users do not use the OPAC as a reference point for the retrieval of information. For this reason, this study tends to explore users' perception of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) in enabling

information retrieval in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library (NAL), University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), having observed that no known study has been done in that aspect.

Methodology

This study explores users' perception of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) in enabling information retrieval among registered users of the library. The study used a descriptive survey research design. The simple random sampling technique was used to determine the sample size for the study. Out of 15,483 registered library users, a total of seven hundred and seventy-four (774) users (which are 5% of the total population) were sampled as the population of the study. This is in line with Mole (2019) who stated that, for a population that runs in several thousands, 5% - 14% samples should be drawn. This population cut across all levels and modes of study in the university. The data for the research was gathered through the instrument of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to answer the three research questions for the study. Question number 1 & 2 had five items while 3 had seven items. The items were measured

with Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). The printed questionnaires were administered for four days by the research assistant. It was administered randomly to every library user that used the library within the four days of distribution. Out of the seven hundred and seventy-four (774) questionnaires distributed, seven hundred and fifty-seven (757) were returned. Among the returned questionnaires, some of them could not be used for the study due to errors and unwillingness of the respondents to complete the questionnaires. However, a total of six hundred and eleven (611) which is more than 40% of the population were considered useful and were analysed for the study.

Data analysis and presentation

The data analysis and presentation were done in line with the research questions and presented in charts. The data were analysed using frequency and percentage.

Research question 1: How do users perceive the effectiveness of the library's OPAC for information retrieval?

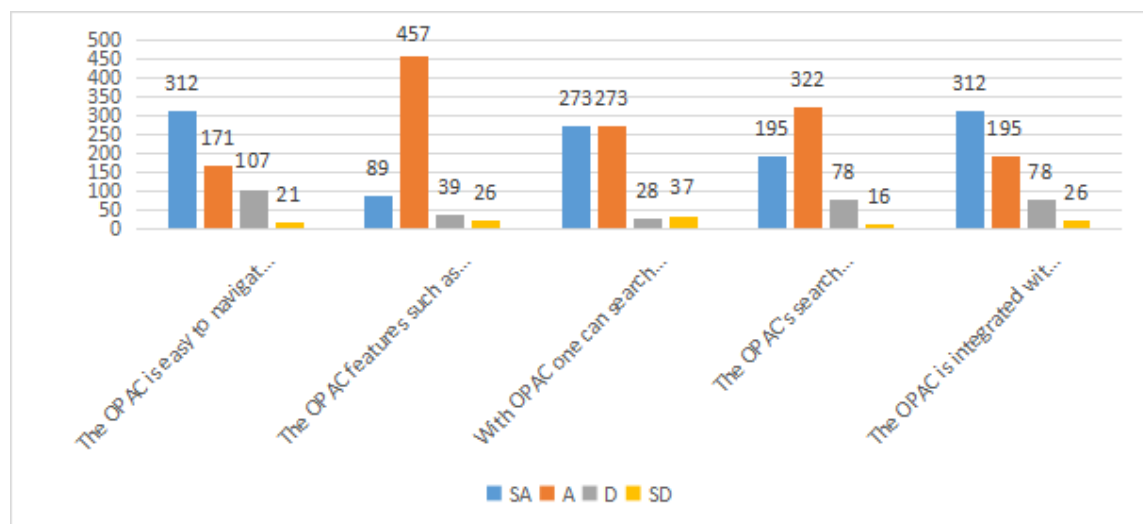


Figure 1: Perception of users on the effectiveness of OPAC for information retrieval

The respondents were asked their perceived effectiveness of the library OPAC as regards

to retrieval of information. The questions were asked in the areas of interface navigation, clear result presentation,

accessibility and its integration to other services. The responses received shows that respondents agree that the OPAC is easy to navigate with cumulative sum of 483 (79%) and that the clear search results enhance usability with cumulative sum of 546 (89.4%). The respondents also affirmed with cumulative sum of 546 (89.4%) that with the internet, one can access the OPAC anywhere. Also, cumulative sum of 517 (84.6%) agrees that OPAC search functionality enables one to located materials efficiently and cumulative sum of 507(83%) agrees that the

OPAC is integrated with other library services.

This is in line with Vohra (2017), Ukpebor in Igere (2022), who are of the opinion that OPAC provides wider access since users can retrieve information from any participating library or even search online from their home computer.

Research question 2: What is the level of satisfaction of users' in the use of OPAC system for retrieval of information resources in the library?

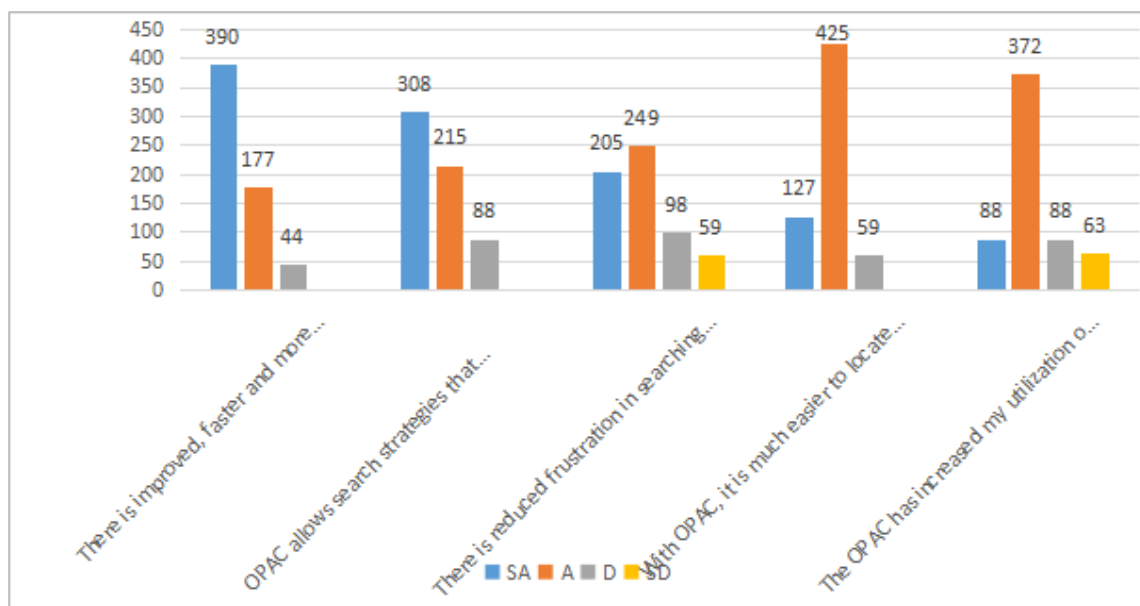


Figure 2: Level of satisfaction of users' in the use of OPAC system for retrieval of information resources in the library.

In figure 2 above, the respondents were asked their satisfaction level with the OPAC in terms of accessibility of information resources in the library. The responses provided shows that there is high level of improved searches when compared to traditional catalogue. They also see a high level of reduces frustration in searching for materials and ensures utilization of library resources with OPAC. In the area of search strategies, a total of 523(85.6%) respondents affirm that OPAC allows search strategies that exceed those that can be used with card catalogue. Also, a total of 552(90.4%)

respondents agree that OPAC makes it easier to locate materials leading to increased success rate in finding the information needed. This finding confirms the study of Tofi, et al (2020) who affirmed that there is a high perceived impact of OPAC on effective retrieval of information resources by postgraduate students in Benue State University, Makurdi. The study shows that the OPAC is used for various purposes such as: to know the available resources in the university library, to locate books by author, title and subject, assists in obtaining books from the university library, among others.

Research question 3: What are the challenges encountered by users while using the library OPAC for information retrieval?

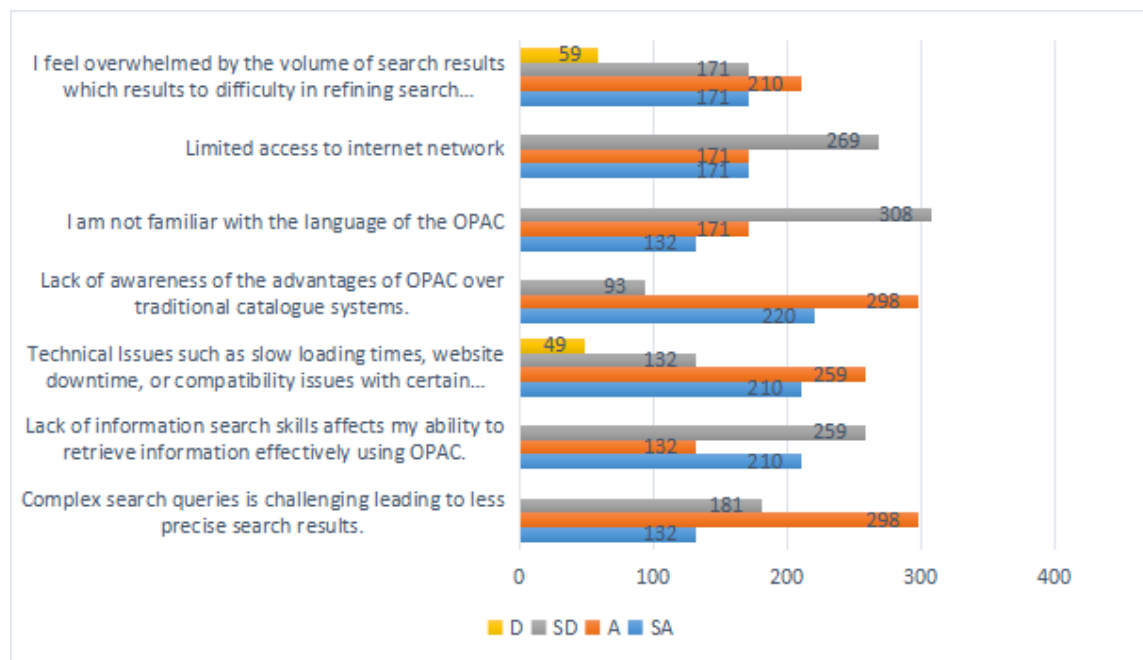


Figure 3: Challenges of user while using OPAC for retrieval of information resources in the library.

The figure 3 above provided responses on the challenges and barriers faced by library users in utilizing the OPAC for information retrieval. The respondents feel overwhelmed by the volume of search results from OPAC with cumulative sum of 381(62.1%) and they agree that there is limited access to the internet with the cumulative sum of 342 (56%). The respondents also agree that there is lack of awareness of the advantages of OPAC over traditional catalogue system and there is also the challenge of lack of information search skills that affect their ability to use OPAC with cumulative sum of 518(84.8%) and 342(56%) respectively.

This finding is in line with the findings of Abareh and Basaka (2017) and Makun, et al (2019) who discovered that there is little or no knowledge of OPAC among their respondents. Hence, Ruzegwa (2012) asserted that awareness of OPAC is a first step to increase usage of library educational

resources to aid students in their learning process.

Discussion of findings

The finding of the study confirmed that the NAL's OPAC is easy to navigate, with an intuitive interface that allows for quick information retrieval. It was also confirmed that the OPAC has features that enhances usability. Some of the features include: the advanced search options, filters, and clear search results presentation. This is in line with Kumar and Vohra (2017) who stated that OPAC use is meant to facilitate access and retrieval of resources through several search approaches such as basic search, advanced search, Boolean search and through diverse access points such as author, title, keywords, ISBN, ISSN and class number.

The study also revealed that when compared to manual catalogue, OPAC provides improved, faster and more efficient searches which results to quicker access to needed resources. Consequently, there is increased

utilization of library resources as one can discover and access materials more effectively. This is in line with the investigation of Tofi, et al (2020) who studied the perceived impact of OPAC on effective retrieval of information resources by postgraduate students in Benue State University, Makurdi. Their findings show that there is high perceived impact of OPAC on effective retrieval of information resources by postgraduate students in Benue State University, Makurdi.

The findings of the study revealed that, though the OPAC has positive impact on the users, they face technical issues such as slow loading times and website downtime. The study also revealed that lack of awareness of the advantages of OPAC over traditional catalogue systems is also a challenge to the use of OPAC for effective retrieval of information resources in the library. Aju and Tofi (2020) asserted that visitors to university libraries and information centres for research are frustrated due to lack of awareness of OPAC operation, inadequate computers/internet facilities, and other basic ICT skills to access, retrieve and exploit information materials.

Conclusion

The study was carried out to evaluate users' perception of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) in enabling information retrieval in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library (NAL), University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN). From the findings, the study revealed that OPAC is easy to navigate, it can search library resources from anywhere with internet connection and the clear search results enhances usability. The study also shows that the OPAC is integrated with other library services such as the e-resources for easy retrieval. The most significant way the OPAC has benefited the users is that there is improved and efficient search result when compared to the traditional library catalogue. For this reason, there is reduced frustration in searching for materials while using OPAC. Also, OPAC

makes it easier to locate relevant materials leading to increased utilization of library resources.

However, some users feel overwhelmed by the volume of search results displayed with OPAC, a good number of them feel unfamiliar with the language of OPAC and most of them experience technical issues such as slow loading, website downtime, etc. In a similar vein, a good number of users believes that there is lack of awareness of the advantages of OPAC over traditional catalogue system, and there is lack of information search skills that affect the ability to use OPAC. The users were also challenged by limited access to internet network of which without it, OPAC use will not be efficiently utilized.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- The library should assist in equipping the users on the basic information search skills which will aid in their use of OPAC for retrieval of information resources in the library.
- The library should increase the awareness of OPAC services among the university community. The activities on the creation of awareness on the use and importance of OPAC should be consistent and not a one-time activity.
- The library should handle the technical issues recorded as some of the challenges faced by users when using OPAC for information retrieval. These issues such as slow loading or website downtime can be handled by increasing the library's bandwidth.

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